

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Protection of Endangered, Threatened Species at Oceano Dunes SVRA Remains Number Priority for Upcoming Holiday Weekend

The protection of endangered and threatened birds remains the number one priority at the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA) this Memorial Day weekend, said California State Parks Deputy Director David L. Widell.

The summer season, including the Memorial Day weekend, coincides with the nesting seasons for the threatened western snowy plover and the endangered California least tern. These small birds nest on the bare sands within the recreation area. Although their nests are protected within fenced areas, they can still be disturbed by inappropriate visitor activities.

"State Parks is committed to increased ranger and ecologist staffing levels for the weekend to both monitor these species and to ensure that each and every visitor complies with the protection measures that are in place for the plover and terns," said Widell. "The most important thing we can be doing to preserve motorized public access to this facility is to step up our commitment to protect these very important species."

Widell said the number of rangers on duty over the weekend will be up more than 60 percent over the usual amount. The number of field biologists has been increased as well, which will enable extended hours of nest site monitoring. Rangers will be rigorously enforcing vehicle speed limits on the beach, violations of litter and dog leash laws and seeing that visitor activities do not disturb these sensitive species.

The park is a favorite destination for travelers, particularly for visitors from the Central San Joaquin Valley, and annually attracts more than 1.2 million visitors.

As is the practice year-round, each visitor to Oceano Dunes SVRA receives a flyer reminding them that their future access to the park is dependent on their responsible behavior and strict adherence to these laws and park policies:

- Obey posted **15 mph speed limit**; give all birds right of way
- **Do not enter posted nest enclosures**, hang clothes, towels or other items on fences, or drive next to protective enclosures

- Camping or parking is prohibited **within 100 feet** of posted exclosures
- Drive with care to avoid small chicks, especially at night
- Dogs must be kept on leashes and under control at all times
- Dispose of trash properly to avoid attracting predators to nesting area
- Do not pick up sick or injured birds; notify a Ranger immediately
- To avoid frightening nesting birds, kite flying is prohibited south of Pier Avenue

All park staff will be available to answer questions and will provide information about these species to the public and actions that visitors can take to avoid disturbing or harming the birds.

This will mark the first major holiday of the 2002 tourist season. Traditionally, the Memorial Day weekend marks the start of the busy summer season. All 1,000 campsites at Oceano Dunes SVRA have been reserved through the long weekend. Day use attendance is also expected to be busy.

Oceano Dunes SVRA is one of California's most popular State Parks and represents the last 5 ½ miles of beach along California's 1,100 miles of coastline where motorized recreation is still allowed.

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